

**I claim:**

1. A method for performing caller classification of a telecommunications call made to a called party, the method comprising the steps of:
  - 5 receiving an incoming call from a caller;
  - receiving an authorization code from the caller; and
  - performing at least one of a set of predetermined actions, said at least one action having been selected based on the authorization code received from the caller, the set of predetermined actions including at least two different actions selected from
  - 10 the group comprising (i) connecting the incoming call through to the called party, (ii) redirecting the incoming call to a voice mailbox, (iii) providing a recorded message to the caller, and (iv) disconnecting the call,
  - wherein at least a first authorization code results in performing one of said at least two different actions selected from said group and wherein at least a second
  - 15 authorization code different from said first authorization code results in performing the other one of said at least two different actions selected from said group.
2. The method of claim 1 further comprising the steps of performing a lookup of the authorization code received from the caller in a database, and selecting said at least
- 20 one action based upon said lookup in said database.
3. The method of claim 2 wherein a predetermined one of said set of predetermined actions is performed when said lookup fails to locate said authorization code received from the caller in said database.
- 25 4. The method of claim 3 wherein the step of receiving an authorization code from the caller comprises repeating, up to a predetermined number, N, of times, the steps of:
  - receiving an authorization code from the caller, and
  - 30 performing a lookup of the received authorization code in the database,

wherein if all of said predetermined number, N, of said repeated lookups of a received authorization code fail to locate the authorization code in the database, the predetermined one of said set of predetermined actions is performed.

- 5     5. The method of claim 1 wherein the incoming call is transmitted from the caller through a Public Switched Telephone Network.
6. The method of claim 1 wherein the incoming call is transmitted from the caller as voice-over-IP data through the Internet.
- 10    7. The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of playing a prerecorded message in response to receiving said incoming call, the prerecorded message comprising a request that the caller provide said authorization code.
- 15    8. The method of claim 1 wherein said authorization code is provided by the caller with use of a telephone keypad.
9. The method of claim 1 wherein said authorization code is provided by the caller with use of a spoken voice.
- 20    10. The method of claim 1 wherein the predetermined action of connecting the incoming call through to the called party comprises connecting the incoming call through to the called party with use of a ring tone which is selected from a plurality of possible ring tones based on the authorization code received from the caller.
- 25    11. The method of claim 1 wherein the authorization code received from the caller is determined based on a calling number from which the incoming call originates.
12. The method of claim 1 wherein the at least one action is selected further based on a current date.
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13. The method of claim 1 wherein the at least one action is selected further based on a current time of day.

14. The method of claim 1 wherein the at least one action is selected further based on  
5 a count of a number of times the authorization code received from the caller has been previously received.

15. An apparatus for performing caller classification of a telecommunications call made to a called party, the apparatus comprising an interception module adapted to:

10 receive an incoming call from a caller;  
receive an authorization code from the caller; and  
initiate the performance of at least one of a set of predetermined actions, said at least one action having been selected based on the authorization code received from the caller, the set of predetermined actions including at least two different actions  
15 selected from the group comprising (i) connecting the incoming call through to the called party, (ii) redirecting the incoming call to a voice mailbox, (iii) providing a recorded message to the caller, and (iv) disconnecting the call,

wherein at least a first authorization code results in performing one of said at least two different actions selected from said group and wherein at least a second  
20 authorization code different from said first authorization code results in performing the other one of said at least two different actions selected from said group.

16. The apparatus of claim 15 further comprising a database, and wherein the interception module performs a lookup of the authorization code received from the  
25 caller in said database, and selects said at least one action based upon said lookup in said database.

17. The apparatus of claim 15 wherein the interception module is co-located with the subscriber.

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18. The apparatus of claim 15 wherein the interception module is located within a telecommunications network.

19. The apparatus of claim 18 wherein the telecommunications network comprises a Public Switched Telephone Network.
- 5 20. The apparatus of claim 18 wherein the telecommunications network comprises the Internet and the incoming call is transmitted from the caller through the Internet as voice-over-IP data.
- 10 21. The apparatus of claim 15 wherein the interception module is further adapted to play a prerecorded message in response to receiving said incoming call, the prerecorded message comprising a request that the caller provide said authorization code.
- 15 22. The apparatus of claim 15 wherein said authorization code is provided by the caller with use of a telephone keypad.
23. The apparatus of claim 15 wherein said authorization code is provided by the caller with use of a spoken voice.
- 20 24. The apparatus of claim 15 wherein the authorization code received from the caller is determined based on a calling number from which the incoming call originates.